

education. The more wholehearted our commitment to our particular local context, the more we expose the roots of our humanity, from which can grow a theology, whose truth can be recognised by all people.

*Revd Christopher Garland.*

*Theology: the University and the Modern World*, Robert Runcie, Paul A. B. Clarke, Andrew Linzey, and John Moses, London UK: Lester Crook Academic Publications, 1988.

This book is of obvious relevance to the discussion over the re-establishment of a Department of Religious Studies at the University of Papua New Guinea. It was compiled to mark the opening of a Centre for the Study of Theology, that is in, but not of, the University of Essex in England. The opening lecture is by Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury. He argues that the study of theology at a university is a sign to both the ecclesiastical and academic worlds: "To the ecclesiastical world, it is a sign that the pursuit of truth is inseparable from the search for God; to the academic world, a sign that, without God, the search for truth is incomplete. Either way, it is the product of that vision, which refuses to separate faith from thought."

Despite the attempt made since the Enlightenment to divorce faith and reason, Dr Runcie argues that they meet in "that experience of wonder, which so often accompanies a scientific discovery". He maintains that Descartes, the direct precursor of the Enlightenment, maintained the link between truth and God, for he thought that thinking works, because it is upheld by the graciousness of God. Descartes, therefore, took as his watchword that "God will not deceive".

Dr Runcie goes on to say that secular society has limited its own concerns to the pursuit of individual happiness, and dismisses any wider vision of religion as irrelevant. Yet, such a narrow view belittles the importance of education, for education is, in itself, a spiritual activity, concerned with the development of the whole person. If a person is just seen as an economic resource, then his scope is limited, so he or she needs to be seen as a child of God. By providing a vision of the whole person as a child of God, a department of theology can provide a vision of man and society, which is relevant to the whole University.

Dr Runcie stresses the need for cooperation between the churches, in the study of theology at a university, and for a theology that is in touch with modern life. There must be interplay between theology and social reality. There must be an encounter between Christians and other religions. He concludes by saying that “Christian theology, with its vision of ‘manhood taken into God’, implies a vigorous, imaginative, and inclusive vision of education at every level”.

So Dr Runcie provides a vision that accords well with the Papua New Guinea search for “integral human development”.

In the next section of the book, Andrew Linzey argues that “the prior demand upon all Christians must be God, not the desire for moral or doctrinal uniformity”. In a university, he says, reason is not possible without faith.

John Moses looks at the nature of a university as a school of universal learning, and asks whether the teaching of theology has a contribution to make to a tradition of learning that encompasses some comprehensive and coherent vision of reality. He argues that science, of itself, cannot explain the meaning of our place in the universe, which is a question about the “human condition”, which all people need to answer in some way. Yet, he says, Christian theology provides a framework of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, in which such questions can be answered.

Finally, Paul A. B. Clarke looks at the plight of modern man, estranged from his community. He says that the church needs to take the modern “unhappy consciousness” of alienation seriously, without being trapped in it. Since the church has a sense of tradition of being in continuity with the past, and able to be reformed, in order to face the future, it has doors in and out of the situation of modern man. In this way, theology can help the university cope with the modern world, and free it from the shifting sands of relativism. Paul A. B. Clarke argues for wisdom, as a corrective to mere knowledge. He asks for interplay between theology and other disciplines, both at the level of theology, and of practice. He says theology should be engaged in, but not completely engaged by, the world. Such a theology will be a theology of diversity, and it will take, as its starting point, Kant’s demonstration of the limits of reason, for that guarantees a place for faith.

In sum, the book argues that theology offers a marriage between faith and reason, and that, without faith in an overall worldview, knowledge is victim to every passing trend. Therefore, a university, without access to a department of theology, is at the mercy of every passing theory, and prevailing modern anxiety. On the other hand, theology needs contact with other disciplines, to test its own claims to rational thought.

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